

SUBJECT STATEMENT

MV – Sgt. Michael Vanzo BG – Lt. Ben Gordon RJ – Dep. Royce James
SG – Sgt. Sean Gowan

- MV Good morning, this is in reference to IA case number 26-001. The subject of this internal affairs investigation is Dep. Royce James. I'm Sgt. Vanzo along with Lt. Gordon and we are both with the Volusia Sheriff's Office Internal Affairs unit. Also present for the interview with Dep. James is Sgt. Gowan. Today's date is February 6, 2026, and the current time is 11:19. The location of this interview is the Sheriff's Office administration building in Deland. Dep. James, do you understand this interview is recorded?
- RJ Yes.
- MV I am conducting an official administrative investigation concerning GO-026-02.V.D.9.p – Use of Equipment: BWC – Employees shall not intentionally through acts of negligence or inattention, cause interruption or defeat of the BWC for its intended purpose of recording law enforcement encounters. GO-026-02.V.B.3...
- BG Did you (inaudible) as the...
- MV Yes.
- BG Do you wanna just put this (inaudible) Sorry I didn't mean to interrupt you. Sorry didn't mean to mess you up.
- MV Excuse me GO-026-02.V.B.3 – Disciplinary Rules – Any other conduct or action, on-duty or off-duty, of such seriousness that disciplinary action is considered warranted. GO-026-02.V.C.5.m – Negligence, Not Endangering – Employees shall not ignore or violate official general orders, orders, or supervisory instructions or knowingly fail to properly execute the duties and responsibilities of their assigned positions. GO-026-02.V.G.1.a – General Proficiency – VSO personnel are required to maintain the job knowledge, skills and abilities required for the performance of the duties and responsibilities attendant to their positions. As a Florida Law enforcement officer and a notary public of the State of Florida, I'm empowered to take sworn statements. At this time, I will ask you to raise your right hand to be sworn. Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the statement you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you god?
- RJ I do.
- MV Any false statements about material matters given by a witness under oath will constitute perjury, which is a third-degree felony, according to 837.02 Florida Statutes. Do you

understand that if you knowingly make a material misstatements of facts to me during this investigation, you will have committed the crime of perjury?

RJ Yes.

MV Ok I'm gonna sign and then if you could as well. Lieutenant, can you please? Alright sir please state your name for the record.

RJ Royce James.

MV Prior to this interview you were provided with a complete case file in regards to this investigation. I'm sorry prior to this interview were you provided with a complete case file in regards to this investigation?

RJ Yes.

MV Have you had the opportunity to review the file?

RJ Yes.

MV Also you signed and acknowledged a Garrity warning form, do you have any questions or concerns regarding the case file, Garrity form or the law enforcement officer bill of rights?

RJ No.

MV Do you mind if Lt. Gordon asks you any questions during this interview?

RJ I don't mind.

MV How long have you been a law enforcement officer?

RJ 14 years.

MV And what is your current duty assignment?

RJ Patrol deputy in district 6.

MV Ok Dep. James so you had a chance to review the case file. This investigation evolves from an arrest that you made on October 3rd, stemming from October 2nd of 2025 involving a [REDACTED] Can you take us back to how you became involved in the incident and where it all started.

RJ I was on, I was on regular patrol and Dep. Berard called me and said a firefighter who works [REDACTED] had an incident that happened over in Deltona and she told me, she told me that she called the police, deputies came out and she

wasn't comfortable with the decision that was made at that time. He gives me a very brief overview, he didn't really seem like he knew the entirety of it, but he asked if I would go just generally speak with her and find out if I, like to give her advice on what she should or should not do. Um...

MV Ok before we go beyond that point, so Dep. Berard contacted you?

RJ Right.

MV Ok was he working as well?

RJ No he was off.

MV Ok.

RJ It was cuz he's on my opposite so he was off.

MV Can you explain how he received this information?

RJ Yeah apparently...

MV Or made contact?

RJ Apparently he knows her to some extent. I don't know the extent he knows one of the victims, the firefighter who was [REDACTED]

MV The male or the female?

RJ The female.

MV Ok.

RJ He knows her to some extent. Apparently she reached out to him, ran down a brief overview of what happened and he goes well it doesn't really sound right but let me have another deputy speak with you to see if something was done improperly or whatever have you. So, I agree and I [REDACTED] and kind of met cuz the fire station is literally [REDACTED] so I walked over there...

BG What time was this approximately?

RJ I, I can't remember.

BG I think, I think Sgt. Gonzalez said that it's...

RJ It was...

BG ...he presumed it was like after briefing so.

RJ Yeah I'm think, we were on night shift then so I'm assuming 7'ish something like that.

BG Ok.

RJ So I walk [REDACTED] and, sorry, we have a pretty good relationship with the firefighters over there so they routinely ask us law enforcement related questions so I'm assuming this is just gonna be some general what do you think I should do type, type thing. So when I walk over there the victim proceeds to tell me basically runs down what happened. Her ex she's dating a new man who's also a firefighter. Her current boyfriend ex-girlfriend is also a firefighter so it's a circle of firefighters. And her new boyfriend broke up with [REDACTED] and her and him are now dating in an exclusive relationship. And there's a lot of she mentioned vaguely some like third party stuff where it's blatantly obvious [REDACTED] is upset at their new relationship and...

MV Can you explain what's blatantly obvious?

RJ Like because there's a, there's a circle of firefighters so they all kind of collectively talk and no different from in law enforcement you hear little things. Nothing directly per say...

MV M hm.

RJ ...to, to the female victim but it's, it's rumors and gossip and talks where [REDACTED] is expressing to third party people, she is pissed off that those two people are now dating. It was almost implied like as if it might have been some cheating going on or something like that or something like that and so that's upsetting [REDACTED] and she's talking about it amongst her circle of friends.

MV M hm.

RJ The victim then says she and her new boyfriend were out and they come home and they see around 75 or 100 at the time what they thought were used tampons thrown in the yard. And she said there's a video of a truck resembling a truck registered, that [REDACTED] drives involved in it and there's people seen throwing tampons into her yard. She tells me she called the police when she got home and saw this and Dep. Bartzler came out to investigate. She told me Dep. Bartzler in a nutshell told her well since this is only they only did this one time there's nothing we can do, and he just left it at that. And after Dep. Bartzler left this didn't really sit right with them. They were just like there's got to be something this can't be just legal that people can just do this and nothing can be done so that caused her to reach out to Dep. Berard to pick his brain which led me to go over there and speak with her.

MV Ok before we go beyond that point, so the interaction with and you said the victim so is that [REDACTED]?

RJ Yes.

MV Is that who you're referring to?

RJ Yes.

MV Was that recorded on BWC?

RJ No I, I didn't think this was gonna evolve into this, so I thought it was just a general conversation so no I didn't activate my BWC for that.

MV Ok. The, so through the interaction with her you realize it's been previously reported and Det. Bartzler was involved in that one.

RJ Right.

MV Did you have any conversation with Det. Bartzler as to his thought process or maybe he was, you're missing something or he's missing something or?

RJ I, I did talk with him after a while after the fact not immediately right then and there no.

MV Ok. So now we're at the point you're in contact with [REDACTED] she tells you this information and then what did you do with this information now that you have it?

RJ Well I, I suggested I was I told her again at this point I didn't really super dive into it, but I did ask enough questions to determine there's a domestic relationship here and...

MV Can you explain that?

RJ Sure. The male I can't remember his name...

BG [REDACTED]

RJ [REDACTED] yeah [REDACTED] were dating as boyfriend and girlfriend, and they had previously lived together as boyfriend and girlfriend so they're in a domestic relationship forever. And so when [REDACTED] told me Dep. Bartzler did nothing not even, not to not to include an arrest but not even an incident report I disagreed with that. I'm like well there's an allegation something happened so by policy and law at least we have to do an incident report, we have to. So that I disagreed with that so I suggested because of that I suggested she contacts police when she gets home again and express that at least that should have been done.

MV So you disagreed with that not even a report was generated.

RJ Correct because you know it's, it's they're domestic it's an allegation of possible some crime has been committed we have to do an incident report at least.

MV And did she call law enforcement?

RJ Well I, I suggested that was my suggestion to her. I suggested she rehashes that because at least that should have been done and have somebody thoroughly look into it and at least document that something occurred in this domestic relationship. She was leery to do that because she was really uncomfortable with how the first situation was handled so she asked would I just do it for her. And so I, I was like I don't mind doing it for you but typically that's not how we do things but since you're here, I don't mind doing it for you and I ran it by Sgt. Gonzalez...

MV M hm.

RJ ...and he said yes since she's already here we can just take, take it over.

MV And when you say she's already here what are you referring to?

RJ Right there at the district 6 office.

MV Ok.

RJ [REDACTED] to the district 6 office.

MV Ok. Have you ever met [REDACTED] before?

RJ No.

MV Up until this point?

RJ No.

MV Or her boyfriend [REDACTED]

RJ No.

MV .. [REDACTED] ok. Alright so then once you reached out to Sgt. Gonzalez do you, do you give him a synopsis of what's going on?

RJ Very brief because I didn't know I, I knew very surface level at that time but I was just, I was pretty much reaching out to him to ask permission to take ownership of something that was not our responsibility.

MV Ok.

RJ And I don't, I don't particularly like just kicking the can down the road if something falls in my lap, I don't mind just doing it.

MV M hm.

RJ But I didn't want to do that without at least letting him know that's what I was gonna do.

MV Do you know if there was any conversation between Sgt. Gonzalez and the district 4 sergeants about taking this case or taking ownership of this case?

RJ At that time no I know at, later on him and, him and Sgt. Leven talked but at that time I don't think they talked at all. I, I don't know.

MV Ok. So in this moment you have conversation with Sgt. Gonzalez, and he says ok you can proceed with the investigation and so what did you do next?

RJ Right cuz I, I felt bad just telling her you know she, she already has the impression she was kind of blown off. I don't want to send the impression I'm also blowing you off so that's why I was totally fine with just taking ownership of it and just doing it all myself.

MV Ok. So what did you do next in your investigation?

RJ At that point I started investigating. I you know obviously gathered names, demographics, I obtained [REDACTED] information, looked her up in DAVID saw what car she had. I did not have video or I'm sorry I didn't have photos of the tampons. She had some photos on her phone which she showed but Dep. Bartzler didn't, didn't take photos or anything so I didn't have the magnitude of how many tampons it was until [REDACTED] started show, started showing me, sorry. So, I watched a video that [REDACTED] emailed to me where it shows a truck matching a truck registered to [REDACTED] It shows the truck driving past the house slowly almost like scoping to see if the coast is clear. The truck then goes far down the street almost out of camera view and it waits down there for a little bit til other motorists were gone. Cuz the street was kind of cluttered with cars so other motorists got out of the way. Then you see the truck turn around and you see somebody on the back of the truck throwing handfuls of what I expect to be the tampons in the yard. The truck is stopped right in front of the house, and you see this happen. At that point another car pulls behind [REDACTED] truck like because she's blocking the road so you see [REDACTED] truck drive off out of camera view and a couple of moments later you see a person run in the yard on foot, throw some more tampons and then that person runs out of camera view and then they leave.

MV Ok so this is a video that she supplied to you?

RJ Correct.

MV So I see there's an additional reported victim in this case, [REDACTED]

RJ Correct.

MV Did you ever make contact with [REDACTED]

RJ I, on the phone he was, he was at work he works over in Orlando I think so he was hours away in the middle of a 24 hour shift so no I didn't talk, I didn't physically talk with him that day.

MV Ok. Once you made the decision to proceed with the investigation any, any thought process in doing sworn statements with them either recorded I see there was a statement made by [REDACTED] but with [REDACTED] any?

RJ Since [REDACTED] was at work I couldn't do a written statement with him and from what I understand we can't really do sworn statements over the phone, but I did have [REDACTED] do one.

MV Did when you spoke with [REDACTED] over the phone, was that recorded in any manner on BWC?

RJ No.

MV Ok. Any, any reason for the, for that?

RJ Honestly no I was so far into this, again I didn't think I was gonna take this and by the time I decided to take it I already had a lot of the information I needed to proceed with whatever I needed to do with the investigation.

MV Ok. So now we're at the point she supplies you with a written statement, you spoke with [REDACTED] over the phone, and are they wanting to pursue charges?

RJ Yes.

MV Ok did we, did you discuss with them what charges they potentially had?

RJ At that time in my mind I felt it was either gonna be one or two charges. Obviously stalking and there's another charge I was thinking of, it I'd have to look it up, but it says if you litter with the purpose of intimidating or threatening that's also a first degree misdemeanor so both stalking and this charge are both the same level of crime. I think the spirit of the littering law was more toward if you guys remember when people were leaving pamphlets at Jewish churches like harassing them and intimidating them that's where that law stemmed from. So that immediately popped into my mind because they're littering but it's with the intent to threaten or intimidate. I didn't feel the tampons were thrown in the yard for the purposes of intimidating or, or, I felt it was more of a harassment type thing because of the nature of their domestic relationship.

MV Ok.

RJ So that's why I decided not to go with the littering statute, and it felt more like a stalking thing to me.

MV Ok. So, your mindset went towards it's, it seems to fit stalking elements.

RJ Right.

MV Can you explain to me what those elements are for the charge of stalking?

RJ Sure. Stalking is a couple of elements. The main one is you need some sort of course of conduct or a pattern of behavior. The statute also says however short, there's no dur, there's no definitive duration these this course of conduct or this pattern of behavior needs to be, so it doesn't matter how long it takes. It's a course of conduct or a pattern of behavior however short directed at a specific person that serves no legitimate purpose, and it causes victims distress, emotional distress. And in my mind given the fact you know obviously this plan was thought up, tampon a large quantity of tampons were purchased, each of them were opened, they were at that time I didn't know whether they were used or not but come to find out later they were, it was red paint which obviously adds to the maliciousness of it. You open up 75 or 100 tampons you spray them with red paint or dip them in red paint you load them up in a truck you drive all the way over to the victim's house, you drive past the victim's house to make sure the coast is clear, you then wait down the street until the coast is clear, you turn around, you stop in front of the house you throw a couple of chunks of the tampons at a time then you drive off and then somebody gets out of the truck, runs back into the yard and throws more tampons, in my opinion that was a course of conduct or a pattern of behavior. I know the entire thing is one incident but it, throughout this incident there is arguably some sort of pattern of behavior or course of conduct that led to you harassing or intimidating the victims. So that's why I decided to go with stalking versus the littering because I, I honestly did not feel the littering was to intimidate. It was more of a harassment thing.

MV Ok. So we'll get more back into I think the elements of the stalking we're gonna jump kind of back into the progression of the, the investigation.

RJ Sure.

MV At the time being. So now you watch the video, and you saw the vehicle and the tampon throwing. What did you do next after you watched the video?

RJ After I watched the video I still needed to obviously it looks like a truck registered to [REDACTED] but I don't know that to be sure. So, I did a little more digging into what that exact truck looks like, like I looked at the vin number looked at what that truck looks like. I also did some investigating on the license plate readers to try to determine if that truck was even in the area at the time this crime occurred. When I looked at the license plate readers, I had multiple hits I don't remember exactly but you almost could see where the truck was going in the direction of the victim's house literally at the time this crime occurred. Also, in the license plate readers it's very grainy because it was dark at this point you could almost make out what seemed to be people that were already sitting in the bed of the truck as it was hitting on the license plate readers making it's way toward the victim's house. Also, they're in the, in the video [REDACTED] showed me and in the LPR's

it, [REDACTED] truck is very distinctive by it, by itself but it also has really large I think they're dog crates or something in the, in the bed of the truck they're really large and very distinctive.

MV Ok.

RJ It looked to be some sort of cover or tarp over those dog crates almost like if somebody's trying to hide them or conceal them from, from regular view. So after speaking with the victims and looking at videos and looking at license plate readers at that point I felt it was time to at least go interview [REDACTED] because I still don't know if she was directly involved, I don't one hundred percent I suspect it's her truck but I don't know for sure and obviously there's more than one person involved in this and I still need to at least get her side of the story because I don't know if you know I get what the victim's are telling me that I don't talk with her I don't speak with her we never invited her over. You know I, [REDACTED] could have told me a completely different story when I got there and she could have showed me proof of yeah, we still talk that was a prank or, or you know whatever. I mean there's, there's a lot of things she could have told me during the interview that would have changed my mind on the stalking charge.

MV Up until that point besides this incident of the tampons did they mention any other contact they've had with her?

RJ Not directly.

MV Or [REDACTED] had with them?

RJ Not directly, no.

MV Ok. And you say not directly you mean? Is that what you're referring to the third party?

RJ Yeah the, yeah the, they were hearing from other people that [REDACTED] upset those two are now dating.

MV Ok. So now you're, you're investigation led you to the point where now you want to interview [REDACTED]

RJ Correct.

MV Ok so I see on BWC you respond to the house, there's another deputy with you, who's that?

RJ McNabb.

MV Ok does she have any part in the investigation?

RJ No I just had her there cuz this, I didn't know where this was going so I didn't want to be there alone and something occur.

MV Ok. So, as a backup unit I'd imagine?

RJ Yes.

MV So once you're there what happened?

RJ When I was there again my, I it's only fair I get [REDACTED] side of the story, so I get there, I explain to her I'm here investigating something that occurred at her ex-boyfriend's house. She immediately says pretty much says I don't even know where he lives, I don't know what you're talking about. Pretty much says I don't know anything about anything. I challenge her by telling her I suspect her truck is there, there's video of this and blah, blah, blah. I kind of go through the evidence I have to support she was involved in this and because of the nature of our, our business you know law enforcement, firefighters, teachers, we are kind of more so in the spotlight than just a person that works a retail job or something.

MV Can you explain, expound upon that, what do you mean?

RJ Sure. There's certain professions that are more in the spotlight because we're kind of public servants and we're more in the spotlight and our behavior even though it might be the same thing a regular civilian does in our profession if we do it it's more highlighted because of the nature of our profession and the interaction we have with the gen, with the public. The public kind of expects law enforcement, firefighters, teachers to behave in a certain manner that's almost superseding people that are not in those professions. So, when she started immediately lying and being defensive I was reminding her you know regardless of what happens with this case that behavior might have a dramatic impact on her career as a firefighter. The media loves to put firefighters, law enforcement, it's just it's just the nature of our career so it's more, it's more enhanced so that's why, that's why I said that to her.

MV Did it upset, did it upset you the interaction that she is a firefighter and she, she was telling you those things that...

RJ I wouldn't say upset I thought, I thought well first of all I thought this entire thing was absolutely ridiculous that anybody would be doing this. Do I think it is worse a firefighter was doing it? Yeah I, I do. Firefighters, law enforcement, teachers we're kind of held to a different standard so yeah I, I do think it, it, makes it worse. I, it didn't upset me per say but I thought it was kind of ridiculous.

MV Did it influence your decision in whether she should go to jail or not?

RJ No.

MV Whether she was a firefighter or not?

RJ No. And I mean in theory the victims are firefighters too, so I mean everybody involved in this is firefighters so no it didn't sway my decision at all.

MV Ok. So now you're there you're talking to her and I think we're at the point where she says she didn't recall or knew where he lived and then you challenged her, can you continue from that point on.

RJ Right I pretty much laid out all of the probable cause per say to where I can say I'm pretty confident you were somehow involved in this. When I give her that overwhelming amount of evidence that I've already gathered at that point her story changes. She then admits to being there but denies being the one that physically throws the tampons. She immediately placed the blame on [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] lives in Ohio I believe, [REDACTED] lives somewhere over toward Orlando so they're not local.

MV M hm.

RJ So [REDACTED] proceeds to tell me [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] came over to her house for a visit and during this visit [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] hatched this plan to go do this to her ex-boyfriend and [REDACTED] explained to me at that time she had no idea whatsoever what they were doing and just kind of went along with it blindly not even knowing whose house they're going to. Um...

MV At this point with that information was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] now suspects?

RJ Yes.

MV Ok.

RJ Yeah everybody involved were suspects at this point. I will say they're different suspects because they don't have the domestic nature [REDACTED] does with...

BG [REDACTED]

RJ [REDACTED] So, they're suspects but I don't have a domestic relationship there, they're just suspects in this whole nonsense versus [REDACTED]

MV Still suspects in the stalking crime

RJ Correct, yes.

MV Ok.

RJ Yes.

MV Did we ever, did you ever interview [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

RJ No I spoke with them briefly on the phone while I was there with [REDACTED] but my...

MV What was that interaction?

RJ [REDACTED] I allowed [REDACTED] to call [REDACTED] while we were waiting to see what's gonna happen with this and [REDACTED] explains to me [REDACTED] had zero to do with it. Did not know what they were doing and just kind of went along with it, not even knowing whose house they were going to. I did not believe that and, and later on with the interaction with [REDACTED] and I she later admitted, her story changed a couple times, but the final version was she did know at some point prior to getting to her [REDACTED] house they were going to her [REDACTED] house to do this. So, [REDACTED] was explaining to me it was just a prank and I a lot of my, before I even arrived at [REDACTED] house in my mind I was thinking this might be a prank, no different from toilet papering somebody's house or something like that. So, I did spend a good amount of time asking her why like why what was the purpose behind doing this and no part of the interview did she indicate this was just a general, the purpose behind this was just a prank or the actions behind it were just a prank. A prank is something you do with friends you know this is your [REDACTED] who again I can't directly say you're upset he's dating a new girl and, but there's just no purpose behind this other than to, to mess with them. So, I explain that to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was saying well I was the one that actually threw the tampons, [REDACTED] was just the one driving. So, I attempted to explain to them just because you're not doing the actual throwing of the tampons does not mean you're completely innocent in the whole thing. I even gave an example of a bank robbery like you know if you're the getaway driver to the bank robbery and you're still part of that bank robbery just because you're the getaway driver doesn't mean you're completely innocent and evolve or dissolved of all wrongdoing. So that's pretty much what the conversation was with [REDACTED]

MV So at that point where was [REDACTED]

RJ I'm assuming she was at home in Orlando area.

MV Ok.

RJ I don't know for sure.

MV Did we do anything to provide her with an opportunity to give like a formal statement?

RJ My intention was to after I dealt with [REDACTED] my intention was then to start to develop charges on [REDACTED] as well as [REDACTED]. However, when I talked to the victim's after [REDACTED] arrest they told me they don't want to pursue charges on [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] because they felt this was all [REDACTED] idea. She's the only one in this trio that has a motive behind doing what she did. Also it was...

BG When was that, sorry? So you, is this after you arrested [REDACTED]

RJ Yeah.

BG Ok so you arrested [REDACTED] at what point did that conversation with [REDACTED] and it's [REDACTED] right?

MV Yes.

RJ Yeah.

BG Yeah [REDACTED]

RJ It was a phone call either later that night or the next day I can't remember exactly when.

BG Was that on BWC?

RJ No.

MV Do you have any supplemental report?

RJ I didn't...

MV (inaudible)

RJ I notice I did not do a supplement to that, but I should have, I did not do that.

MV Ok so you made contact, did you call them or they called you?

RJ You mean the victims?

MV Yes.

RJ I, I called right at, at [REDACTED] arrest to let, if I have a victim and I like to call them as soon as possible to let them know what happened.

BG Especially if it was DV.

RJ Right, right.

BG Notification card etcetera.

RJ Right cuz it's, it's important things they need to know like you can go to first appearance, and you might have pretrial so I called her immediately after [REDACTED] arrest and I did let her know [REDACTED] was arrested. That was the dissolution of this whole investigation.

MV Ok and then there was a subsequent phone call where they said they no long, they did not want to pursue charges on [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] is that, am I understanding that correctly?

RJ Yes. I'm pretty sure it was a phone call, I don't, I don't know if we were talking outside the district again but I'm pretty sure it was a phone call I can't remember exactly though.

MV So I'm at the point we're on, we're on scene you're going through your explanation to [REDACTED] as to why you believe this is stalking. She implicates [REDACTED]. Did you ever make contact with [REDACTED]?

RJ No not at all. [REDACTED] lived in Ohio I believe so no and...

MV Any attempt to contacts with local agencies or?

RJ No I didn't feel it was necessary since the victims really didn't want to and their, their nature is not domestic violence. I didn't feel it was even necessary to.

MV And I know we're speaking of the domestic violence I understand the relationship between [REDACTED] sorry between [REDACTED]

RJ M hm.

MV ...I see there's two charges...

RJ Right.

MV ...for stalking. Can you explain the second stalking charge, because [REDACTED] not related in, any way domestic.

RJ Well yeah they're, it's two victims so they're both in my opinion they were gonna get both stalking charges so obviously one's domestic and one's not but they're both the crime of stalking.

MV Ok.

SG If I can ask.

MV Yeah.

SG When we were reviewing the documents he saw at the top of the I think it's at the top of the affidavit.

BG (inaudible) yeah.

SG You don't click in each box for each victim or each crime whether it's domestic it's just a one over if it's domestic or not and so that may have led to the...

BG The belief that...

SG The belief that it was two charges of domestic violence stalking.

BG Ok.

MV Ok.

SG What was one charge of domestic violence stalking, one charge of simple stalking.

RJ And if you look at the charging affidavit one of the charges of stalking has no bond, the other charging of stalking does have a bond.

MV Can you explain what that means?

RJ Sure. If you get arrested for a crime related to domestic violence the state of Florida says that, that defendant does not get a bond. What this does is it enables the person to be forced in front of a judge so if it if they for example if they had a bond, they would be able to bail out prior to making it to a judge. The reason that is there is because they want that defendant to be forced in front of a judge. This gives a judge the opportunity to enforce conditions upon the defendant's release. They're called pretrial release conditions, so this enables the judge to go ok we're gonna release you but we're gonna release you based on these conditions. The conditions could be no contact with the victims, no violent contact, no drugs or alcohol blah, blah, blah. So the, the, that will enable the judge to give these conditions upon the person's release to try to prevent any subsequent contact or violations with the victims. It also gives the victim an opportunity to attend first appearance and voice their, voice their opinion in what they want to see happen.

MV Ok so the charge with the no bond that was for [REDACTED]

RJ Correct.

MV And then the subsequent one for [REDACTED]

RJ Right with the system you can't say this is domestic.

BG One is domestic and the other one's not.

RJ You can't do that. On the incident report you can link a crime to a person, but you just can't say this is domestic violence stalking, this, the charge box is just for charges and as we know domestic violence isn't a charge it's just a characterization. But anything any report or, or 707 that has any domestic in nature you check just the domestic violence box.

MV Ok so jumping back into we're still in front of [REDACTED] house. Obviously on camera she's outside her front door and you're talking to her and at some point [REDACTED] is on the

phone or on speaker. Do you feel you gave [REDACTED] the opportunity to really explain herself in great detail? Do you feel that you gave her a proper amount of time to do that?

RJ I do. I, I read that was one of the issues in their complaint and I hadn't watched my BWC until just now and when I rewatched it, I do not think I was talking over her, I do not think I was rude. I know I saw in one part she was saying I cursed and lunged at her but later that was recanted...

BG Yeah.

RJ ...so that's (unintelligible) but no I, I spent a considerable amount of time asking her primarily the two things I was interested in. What was the motive behind this to distinguish was is this a prank or is this has malicious ill intent because that really is going to make my determination whether I can confirm this is going to be a crime or that this is just some joke.

BG M hm.

RJ And also, I wanted to know who else was involved if she was involved at all. So yeah I feel like I gave her plenty of time to explain or dispel my alarm per say that this was not something that was done with malicious intent.

MV Ok while we're speaking about that, so while on scene and there's a conversation between you two, she says well someone's having a bad day.

RJ Yeah.

MV Can you explain this interaction and kind of give some insight into that remark?

RJ Yeah, I think and rightfully so she was frustrated about the whole incident and I, I truly believe she didn't think this would potentially make it to this level because she doesn't understand certain concepts of the law. I fully get it. So, the fact that all this was rising to a level where she could potentially be arrested it's gonna affect her career the embarrassment, I think she became a little aggravated. And again, rightfully so I'm not knocking her for that I'd be, I'd be aggravated too. I think that's what led to her saying I'm having a bad day which pretty much implies I'm doing this for no legitimate reason only to because I'm having a bad day.

MV So what did you say in response?

RJ I told her I was not having a bad day, I was having a great day.

MV Ok when you said that back to her did you say it with intention to kind of throw it back at her or? What I'm saying is everyone has different, they perceive things in different ways and it appears in this particular one after receiving comments you're a firefighter and things like that and then the comments about I'm having a great day she perceived in my

opinion that it, it was kind of like a one sided kind of discussion and that you were annoyed with her.

RJ I, I can understand how that could be perceived. The reason I replied with I'm having a great day is I'm, I'm trying to imply I'm not doing this because I'm having a bad day. There's reasons I'm doing this and she needs to start understanding those, there's reasons I'm doing this, I'm not doing this just because I'm having a bad day. So I, I would say that's why I made that, that comment back to her.

MV Ok. I see at a certain point you, you consult your sergeant?

RJ Yes.

MV Up until this point was your mind already made up with the decision to arrest?

RJ Up until which point?

MV Contacting your sergeant.

RJ After the interview with [REDACTED]

MV Correct.

RJ After the interview with [REDACTED] yes. My mind was made up that I...

MV And (unintelligible) up until that point was your mind made up? Prior to the interview?

RJ Prior to the interview? No, no, no, no, no. No, I was far from made up prior to the interview. I have a lot, there's a lot of things that could have happened during the interview with [REDACTED] to completely deter me from, from stalking. She could have pulled out her phone and been like we're kind of seeing each other on the back we're, we're cheating you know we still talk and there's a plethora of things that she could have said that would have killed my, my stalking my suspected stalking.

MV And then once you're there you conduct an interview with her outside her home. And we're at the point you consult your sergeant. Do you consult your sergeant on every call?

RJ No.

MV Ok. Why particularly this one? What about it led you to need to call your sergeant?

RJ A couple reasons. One he asked me to so there's that and...

MV Any reason why?

RJ I don't know. It was more of a kind of keep me updated on what you're doing and what's going on. I, I think a lot of it probably had to do with the fact that I was over in district 4 instead of district 6 and he wants to make sure that he keeps their sergeants in in the loop of what's going on in their district. I think that had a lot to do with it. Also, obviously her profession I'm not gonna lie that had something to do with it. If we encounter a you know government official and we might arrest them we're definitely gonna let our sergeants know what's going on with that, so I think those two things had the most to do with it.

MV Ok. We...

BG Real, with that conversation with, with Sgt. Gonzalez, you make the comment to him on, on the phone saying you already know what I wanna do.

RJ Right.

BG Can you walk me through your mindset when, when that comment was made?

RJ That, that comment came from bef, prior to talking with [REDACTED] my mindset was unless she gives me something to change my mind about stalking from what I saw meets the elements of stalking. Now again I still have to interview her...

BG M hm.

RJ ...to see am I gonna continue down that path or or is it gonna change so prior to going over there speaking with him I had explained to him where my mindset was should this remain in this, in this trajectory.

BG Ok what was his feedback to you during those conversations with him?

RJ You mean when I called him on the phone talking...

BG No beforehand like so you're obviously having conversations before you go there which is understandable you're kind of trying to figure out if this fits if it doesn't fit that kind of stuff I completely understand. It's helpful for the record obviously for the people that may be reading this they're not cops so they don't understand maybe that terminology or when you say you already know what I'm gonna do that can understandably maybe concern people that oh he's got a prejudiced...

RJ Ok I, I see what you're saying.

BG So but what I'm interested in is the conversations that you have with Sgt. Gonzalez what, tell me about that like what happened with those?

RJ I got ya. So, when I prior to the interview with [REDACTED] I went to Sgt. Gonzalez and I pretty much laid out what I have so far.

BG M hm.

RJ And, and in a laying out what I have so far I think what I've seen...

BG Meets.

RJ ...what I, meets the elements of stalking.

BG Ok.

RJ Now but that's not the whole story I still have other pieces I have to put I have to put
[REDACTED] there...

BG Right.

RJ ...I have to make sure that's her car, I have to still determine her intent the motive the,
the, there's a lot there's a lot of pieces I have to...

BG Right.

RJ ...fully lock in before I just go this is stalking.

BG Right. What was his response to you when you were talking?

RJ He agreed.

BG Ok.

RJ He agreed I, I needed to get her to admit to certain things, I needed to...

BG Ok.

RJ ...to dispel...

BG But he was generally on board with what your logic was at that point?

RJ Yes.

BG He was, there wasn't, he didn't say oh wait, wait, wait like I don't know if this is good.
There was no, was there any questioning or anything like that back and forth between you
and him during that phase?

RJ Yeah the only, but the questions were pertaining to things that we...

BG That we needed to get but I'm saying like whether or not it fit thus far there were no
questions.

RJ No.

BG You were in agreement that it fit stalking.

RJ Correct.

BG Ok. Sorry.

MV So now we're at the point you're talking to him on the phone. Can you just go over the conversation, first call that you had with him?

RJ With Gonzalez?

MV Yes.

RJ I after, after I concluded the interview with, or you mean after the interview with [REDACTED]

MV Correct.

RJ Yeah after the interview with [REDACTED] I called him and pretty much gave him a synopsis of what that interview entailed and how that added to what I already had prior to interviewing [REDACTED] and I just filled him in on pretty much the genesis of how that, that conversation went.

MV Did you mention she fully confessed to everything?

RJ I did.

MV Ok what exactly did she fully confess to, I guess there was multiple parties, so what did you mean by she fully confessed to everything?

RJ What I meant is she again at first she lied and I mean the final story was she admitted that she was part of it. She admitted to driving the truck, she admitting to knowing where her ex-boyfriend lived, she admitting, she admitted to knowing where they were going prior to even getting there. She admitted knowing what they were gonna do so she, she emphatically denied being involved but what [REDACTED] meant is I didn't throw the tampons I was just driving the truck and I was part of the whole situation. So, in my opinion going back to my example of the getaway driver if you're, a bank robbery takes place and a getaway driver admits he was driving and he drove there and they knew what they were gonna do you're involved in that whole incident. So, when I say admits to everything that's kind of what I meant, the whole the whole picture was she explained from front to start why this whole thing took place.

MV Ok so the fully admitting is not saying that she admitted to the one throwing or the one painting them or purchasing?

RJ Right yeah, she denied purchasing the tampons she denied throwing the tampons she denied thinking of the plan...

BG Do you, do you believe her?

RJ No.

BG You so you think that she helped purchase, helped painted, helped scheme and then drove over there with [REDACTED]?

RJ I think she had...

BG Do you think she threw them too or no?

RJ I don't know if I can say I believe she threw them I, but I don't know who that one person was that ran back into the yard. But if, if I believe she's driving, I don't remember seeing any tampons coming out of the dri, out of the passenger window but...

BG No I think and I from, from my recollection of everything I think that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] allegedly were in the back of the truck.

RJ Right.

BG When the like there was no, no one was inside of the truck they were in the bed of the truck.

RJ That's from what I understand.

BG Ok. So obviously I mean if she's driving the truck she can't like I don't think they were I don't think she was there's video of her throwing it out of the drivers...

RJ I don't, from, from the video I don't see any tampons coming out of the cab of the truck.

BG Right.

RJ They was all from the bed of the truck and then...

BG And then someone runs...

RJ Whoever that was who ran back to the yard.

BG Right.

RJ I, I the video was...

BG Were you able to ever confirm who that was that ran out?

RJ No.

BG Ok.

RJ The video is too grainy to depict that.

SG I think also when we were discussing prior reading through everything, I don't know that, correct me if I get off base. I don't know that we know that she went to the store and bought the tampons or she was aware that they were, they had painted them cuz they did that at her house. She was aware that what the intent was to do (inaudible)...

BG In other words you think it's unreasonable that she wasn't aware of all this stuff.

RJ One hundred percent. It's, it's highly unlikely very unlikely...

BG Yeah.

RJ ...that you have you [REDACTED] arrive at your house with a metric ton of tampons...

BG M hm.

RJ ...also paint. I, I can't even wouldn't even want to know how long it took to individually paint 75 to 100 tampons...

BG M hm.

RJ ...and in no part of this [REDACTED] was inquisitive and what are you doing and why, why, why are you doing this?

BG Yeah.

RJ And then not only them doing that at her house but then to talk [REDACTED] into putting the tampons in the bed of the truck, [REDACTED] are in the bed of the truck riding and [REDACTED] just driving to a completely unknown destination, no I don't believe that at all.

MV Do you feel if you would have spoken to [REDACTED] in great detail about the whole situation would that have maybe changed? Your perception on the incident?

RJ No. Because the because I'll explain why, because they can explain to me all day I thought this was a prank we didn't mean for this to happen. In my opinion that doesn't sway me from, this still meets the elements of stalking. This is if it was a prank then it wouldn't be stalking cuz that's we can argue that's kind of a legitimate purpose if I were to...

BG Yeah.

RJ ...to mess with you that's a legitimate purpose. This serves no legitimate purpose and by interviewing [REDACTED] and harping on why did you do this why did you do this I'm, I'm looking for her to give me an answer that will dispel my alarm into this is malicious not just a prank. It's two very different things in my opinion.

BG I'm gonna be jumping around a little bit. (unintelligible) while we're on the topic.

MV Yeah.

BG So how do you quantify your belief that you have stalking with the, the no information filed at first appearance, the attorneys, how do you, how do you rectify those two things together?

RJ This, this whole thing with stalking has been an argument back and forth since I started this career. There's always an argument of, well you need multiple incidents versus just one incident. So, what I think happened is there was an argument of while there's multiple facets of this incident it's all one incident, so it's not repeated.

BG Well so I think the delineation from, from the dissertation from the state attorney to legal counsel to the judge is that a premeditated for lack of a better word or preparing for the conduct doesn't in itself substantiate a pattern of conduct.

RJ Ok and I...

BG Is what, is what the legal is what I believe the legal finding from, from the various people that have reviewed this.

RJ Right so ok lets run with that. So lets take out the purchasing of the tampons...

BG Yeah.

RJ ...lets take out the thoughtful of the plan lets take out the painting of the tampons which I, I don't really think the painting of the tampons should be taken out because again in my opinion that adds to the maliciousness of it so...

BG Yeah well I don't think the issue is a malicious I, I think that the, the I don't think that anybody is looking at this thinking that it was an innocent I think they knew what they were doing I think the whomever I mean I think it's arguable I think whomever did the act did it with a purpose of, of the emotional distress.

RJ Right.

BG I don't think that, I don't think that's a part of it I think we're back to what the, the prepared the, the...

RJ Ok.

— BG ...preparing for the incident is this is a one, one time deal.

RJ Ok well if we take out the preparing of the incident...

BG M hm.

RJ ...we still have driving to the house...

BG M hm.

RJ ...we still have driving past.

BG But direct contact right it's the pattern that's so the driving too that would be the preparedness like that is still you know whether you gas up if you stop at a gas station and get gas you know you could lump that into ok that's a pattern of conduct, that's just you're preparing for the initial action.

RJ So where, where do we delineate between the preparing versus now the act is there?

BG When they're present when they're actually stalking.

RJ Ok.

BG That's that to me...

RJ Ok.

BG ...is the delineation.

RJ Ok so well lets, lets fast forward to that.

BG M hm.

RJ You arrived at the house.

BG M hm.

RJ You creep by the house to make sure the coast is clear.

BG M hm.

RJ You have a cover over your truck bed...

BG M hm.

RJ ...to hide it. You drive past the house to make sure the coast is clear.

BG Right and I'm not trying to make a defense but what I would say to all that I think the burden of proof on that and the manner in which the 707 was written was, was authored and such that it was, that the pattern you highlighted was the prep the, the preparing for the act. It wasn't the driving by at multiple times. Oh, we're gonna case the place we're gonna ride around it a couple times that that wasn't the manner in which from my understanding looking at the charging affidavit that wasn't the pattern that you were trying to instill...

RJ Ok.

BG ...if that makes sense.

RJ I understand.

BG So do you still think after listening to everything do you still think that this charge is applicable that it should have been a stalking? That like basically the judge and the state attorney's office got it wrong.

RJ Yes and let me, let me reverse engineer this. So, if it's not stalking...

BG M hm.

RJ ...and lets just take the littering thing off the table for a second.

BG M hm.

RJ Then the only other option is this behavior is perfectly legal and acceptable.

BG M hm.

RJ So that means a domestic partner can behave in this manner and us as law enforcement we do nothing.

BG M hm.

RJ That just doesn't sound logical to me. At...

BG Well I can say we've all been to DV incidents where it is close right, and victims have they unfortunately it's a terrible situation but that's not something that we haven't encountered before.

RJ Right.

BG Where victim's plead to us you guys are telling me you can't do anything. Unfortunately, we are bound by we're not the you know we don't construct the laws we are there to enforce the laws that are in the books and I think whether or not that you can or cannot

that's not our role in this, our goal is to effect what has been adopted as law. It's not to say ok well I think that this should be not acceptable so then therefore I'm going to arrest.

RJ Right.

BG If that makes sense.

RJ Right I no, I completely agree with you but I'm saying that to say if we do nothing then I'm saying that to say this is not a violation of any law. And that just I just don't, I just don't feel that. Also the, the state attorney I, I know I just from being at this job a long time I, I know a lot of them. A couple of days after [REDACTED] arrest...

BG M hm.

RJ ...she, she text me and says she text me and she says hey just wanted to let you know, but again sometimes the state attorney keeps you up to date on what they're doing.

BG Yeah.

RJ So...

BG Sometimes they'll they used to give you a notice if they no file on your charge.

RJ Yeah that kind of went away with the dinosaur but they still either call or text or email. But she sends me a message saying hey just letting you know we've decided to drop your stalking case, and I asked why just ok I understand that cuz charges are often reduced dropped or abandoned that happens all the time. I asked why and she says I can read the message verbatim if you want.

MV Sure.

BG Yeah.

RJ Ok. Cuz I don't wanna speak for her.

BG Well and I while you're pulling that up, I do think there's a delineation between there's a delineation between a state attorney without getting into the weeds lowering coming to a plea deal, dropping, and a judge at first appearance not finding probable cause for an arrest.

RJ Right. I was unaware of that.

BG Does that, does that make sense?

RJ Yeah no totally yeah.

BG I think there's a difference in a state attorney saying ok a lot of times they'll say arrest sufficient you know probable cause was found they spent the night in jail arrest was sufficient and then they'll drop it. That that's a different story then the judge saying ok there's no probable cause for the actual arrest.

SG As well though and those cases where you go in and they go at first appearance and the judge finds there is no probable cause or he doesn't feel there's sufficient probable cause, he can challenge the state and tell the state ok you have...

BG (inaudible)

SG ...some time to come, to come back.

BG Right.

SG And I don't know.

BG And that was not done in this case because I think that they thought that there was, there wasn't a need to be found like there wasn't there wasn't anything...

SG Additional facts that weren't included.

BG Correct that no matter what based on what was in the 707 there wasn't anything where they were gonna be able to, to develop probable cause.

RJ Got ya.

BG And so like I, I hear you with the state attorney and I, I fully recognize that but what we're the agency I mean obviously we're in this and so we're trying to figure out ok this happened a decision was made and before we get into the, the kind of at the end of everything why don't you start talking about the second conversation with Sgt. Gonzalez.

SG Can I ask real quick, I know that we're way off on timeline but if I'm as I was looking through the paperwork everything else the state still made a decision to nolle pros this case. Like they had to file a no info or nolle pros it, it wasn't it doesn't appear absent that that this was summarily dismissed by the judge with no prejudice like he's like I find no PC and this is a dead issue it goes back to the state and then the state still had the option...

BG And I think that...

SG ...absent filing this nolle pros.

BG ...I think and I and without getting into the weeds I think that the I think that's what stopped it from her reaching out saying hey we have such and such time to because I think that the judge said that there was no probable cause and then the state also basically

acquiesce and agreed to it essentially instead of saying hey lets, lets you know there's a timeframe lets try to get some stuff together and make, and make a better case essentially.

SG And not to (unintelligible) this point but I do think it's important for her text conversation with him...

BG That's fine yeah if you wanna put it on the record for sure. I'm, I, you saw the email that she had that she corresponded with us I'm assuming.

RJ I, I did I didn't, I didn't know that until then.

BG Ok.

RJ But yeah, she says I dropped your stalking case the other day, made me think of you and I go yeah I heard it might be getting dropped cuz Brooke approached me and said yeah it might be getting dropped and I'm like I don't know I hadn't heard...

BG Brooke?

RJ Not Brooke [REDACTED]

BG [REDACTED]

RJ [REDACTED] So I go just out of curiosity why did it get dropped? She goes the statute says repeatedly. I understand some attorneys have said it can be one event but as of now I'm not subscribing to that theory. Also, I think an arrest was sufficient in that situation. So, I did not I still don't really know what happened with the judge and the state I, I don't really know.

BG That's fine and I'm not trying to like we're not trying to hound, beat a dead horse sort of speak.

RJ Right.

BG But lets pick up with the second conversation.

MV Yeah so, we're on scene you're speaking with your sergeant.

RJ M hm.

MV You give him a rundown and then what does he tell you? In that first phone conversation? Does he make a decision or?

RJ No I, oh ok yeah that's right. So, I lay out pretty much the nature of my interview with [REDACTED] and at that point I felt it was stalking and my mind was made up at that point. So, I explained to him what occurred, I explained to him what I wanted to do and he then said

he'd call me back and he got off the phone, I don't know what he did when he was off the phone.

MV Ok so you're there on scene with [REDACTED] did you guys have any conversations or further dive into this situation?

RJ Not really. She you mean [REDACTED]

BG [REDACTED]

MV [REDACTED] sorry.

RJ Yeah not really. We I, I attempted to explain to her why we're doing this. I attempted to explain to her the nature of domestic violence and why this is very different from not domestic violence. It's, with not domestic violence we have a little more leeway than domestic violence. I think I gave her that scenario again about the being a principle to something because she kept harping on I didn't I wasn't the mastermind I didn't throw the tampons, so I attempted to explain to her just because you didn't specifically throw the tampons doesn't mean you're just completely innocent in all of this.

MV So I see on BWC she was kind of shocked that the whole crux I know you mentioned DV was falling just on her and I think [REDACTED] was on speaker phone on this point. You said if she was there too you'd be arresting her as well?

RJ I believe I said if you were there you'd be facing, you'd be facing charges as well cuz at that point I intended to proceed with attempting to develop charges on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

MV Ok.

RJ But I stopped when the victims said they didn't want to do that.

MV Ok so then we're at the point where now Sgt. Gonzalez and yourself that phone conversation was over, you were speaking to her a little bit more. Did he call you back?

RJ Yeah it was a couple minutes. He called me back. He asked me very, some more basic questions like is there any indication she was ever invited to the house or something to the tune of that. Like have they been in contact, was she invited to the house I think he asked me and then I answer those questions and after that he said he agrees with the decision to make the arrest for the stalking charge.

MV I know you mentioned in that conversation third party stuff and that, that you could something to the effect of you can get that or you can call (inaudible) and get that, do you recall that?

RJ Vaguely yes.

MV Ok can you explain what you were going to get like what evidence were you gonna get or substantiate or add to this?

RJ Well, whatever he asked me to get. I, I felt the gossip and rumors and third-party stuff had no bearing on the case but if my sergeant wants me to make an attempt to figure that out, I would have respected what he asked me to do.

MV And did you do that?

RJ No.

MV Ok. When you say no what do you mean? Like did you try to get the third-party info or?

RJ No I didn't contact any of their family or I'm sorry any of their friends or other firefighters I just I felt that had no bearing on just cuz there rumors and gossip about [REDACTED] doesn't like her new boyfriend I, I felt that was completely irrelevant to the case.

MV Ok. So, then I think we're at the point he calls back and says that there's, there's enough.

RJ Right.

MV Ok. Did he tell you who he consulted with or spoke with or anything?

RJ I know he was talking to Leven. I don't know who else he called but I know he was talking to Leven and from what I understand Leven was ok with it but he didn't think it was a rock-solid earth shattering stalking case. He, he thought it was, it was he thought it was a weaker, a case on the kind of the weaker side but he didn't from my recollection Leven never said no this is no good we shouldn't be doing this he was he was more kind of like I mean you've got it but it's not like it's not like she sent him 500 emails it's just one incident it's an example what I'm saying is husband punching a woman, husband pushing a woman and husband throwing a cup of room temperature water. All of those are battery but we can argue that the water is very minor and nonsense versus punching. So that's kind of what, what they were alluding to.

MV Ok. So...

BG I think to your and just to highlight one of the things in between the phone call number one and phone call number two I think there's a conversation that you have with [REDACTED] where you mention you know essentially if I had it my way you'd already be in the back of my car but I'm gonna defer to what my supervisor says. Is that accurate?

RJ Yes.

BG Now just for the record if he told you that this is not a good arrest what would you have done?

RJ I wouldn't have arrested her.

BG Ok.

RJ I would have did an incident report and called it a day.

BG Ok. So, you basically deferred to what your sergeant said at the end of the day.

RJ Yes, I...

BG You provided him as much facts as you could and then you basically said hey this is what I wanna do but I will listen and adhere to whatever your direction is.

RJ Correct. And if he'd have said don't arrest her then I would have did what I feel should have been done the first time is I would have done an incident report.

BG Just to document...

RJ Document.

BG ...the DV.

RJ Because it's DV I expect that would have been the end of it.

BG I got ya.

MV Do you, do you feel you provided Sgt. Gonzalez with all the information he needed to make the best choice, especially with like the third party contact and then not proceeding with finding that?

RJ I do because again the way I'm thinking the rumors and gossip and other firefighters not liking, I, I thought that had no bearing on, on the case.

MV Ok. So, then the decision was made to arrest, can you explain from that point on.

RJ From that point forward I had McNabb put handcuffs in the front of her, she's pretty small so I didn't think she posed a threat so I put the handcuffs in the front. We briefly she, she mentioned she had dogs in the house (unintelligible) I allowed [REDACTED] to speak with [REDACTED]

BG M hm.

RJ ...to make sure her dogs were good. What else...

MV Was [REDACTED] on her way?

RJ On the phone she said she was going to be. I, I don't know if she actually was or not but she said that she could make sure the dogs were ok cuz I don't want the dogs there alone.

BG Is there, is there any reason why you didn't wait around to talk to [REDACTED] in person to get a statement as to what her side of the story, I mean obviously phone conversation's not a good confession method. You don't even know who you're talking to, you know you could be talking to somebody else.

RJ Right.

BG Is there, what was your mindset as to why you didn't wait for her to come and, and interview her in person.

RJ Well from what I understand according to [REDACTED] she lives in Orlando so we're talking an hour or two away and I, I felt it was inappropriate to wait there with a person I have under arrest to speak with the person that might not even be coming.

BG M hm.

RJ So I just, I just didn't think that was appropriate.

BG Ok.

RJ I mean [REDACTED] might not even show and then...

BG Right.

RJ ...we're waiting there for nothing.

BG No I got ya. I mean there's other methods, that doesn't preclude you from leaving the other deputy there to stand by or to hand off the, I know that district 4 eventually transported the female I think put her in the cage, they had a DUI. That lady was transported with another female...

RJ Yeah, they were, they were...

BG ...so you could have circled back to the house at that point. There were a couple different, there's like there's more than oh I know you don't wanna just sit there with a 10-15 in the back of your car while you're typing and not transporting but there's other methods you could have...

RJ Sure I could have, I could have done that yeah.

MV Ok. So, then she's placed under arrest as you just mentioned. She was transported to district 4...

RJ Yes.

MV ...office is that correct?

RJ M hm.

MV Ok. Once there just go from the minute you arrived to, to your end involvement.

RJ We put her in the cage just like normal and I went in the little office to complete my paperwork. District 4 was burning down that night if I remember it was calls all over the place people running in and out. The did have a DUI...

BG Yeah.

RJ ...and I believe that person was like crazy and combative and...

BG Yeah very loud.

RJ Yeah. Um...

MV Did you have any conversations with [REDACTED] while she was in the cage?

RJ Not initially. When the sergeants, the district 4 sergeants because the DUI was also a female, they said [REDACTED] and that other lady could be transported together however since that's a DUI [REDACTED] gonna be waiting for that person to be processed which as we know takes a while. So cuz it was my intention just to do my paperwork, transport [REDACTED] myself.

BG M hm.

RJ And I believe that was the end of my shift so I would have just went home. But since the sergeant said leave [REDACTED] there and she could, her and the other female could be transported together I knew that [REDACTED] was probably gonna be sitting there longer than if I were to just transport. So, I did offer her something to drink and a snack I believe.

BG Ok.

RJ I believe that was pretty much it I don't really even remember too much talking.

MV In [REDACTED] complaint that she wrote she, she mentions a statement that you said I was trying to get you to shut up. Do you recall saying that to her or if so, what exactly did you mean?

RJ Trying to get her to shut up? I don't, I didn't tell her that. Like get her to shut up at the district? She wasn't really saying anything at the district.

— BG I think it was, I from the context of reading the complaint and talking to the victim I think they interpret it as that you were trying to get her to shut up when you first made contact with her during the interview process. Back when you were, before you, before she was arrested placed under arrest is what the complainant appears to be indicating.

RJ Getting, are you, are you saying I'm trying to get her to shut up during the initial interview with her?

BG Yeah like maybe trying to get her to not get herself in trouble essentially is how I interpret it.

RJ No, I wanted to have that conversation I didn't want her to shut up.

BG Do you think that it's possible and I'm not trying to put words in your mouth but do you think that it's possible that maybe she said that and she, you were potentially trying to get the loud female that was DUI talking loudly running a, would that, could that have potentially been the, the reason of trying to get...

RJ No, [REDACTED] really said very little to nothing...

BG Ok.

RJ ...at the district so there was no, there was no reason for me to tell her to shut up she was just sitting there pretty quiet.

MV Was there any other deputies in the area?

RJ Oh yeah, the place was buzzing.

MV So how long do you, would you say it took you to complete your paperwork? So, she's now in the cage, you're at the district.

RJ I don't know 30 maybe 45 minutes'ish?

MV Ok. And then of course our reports require a notary.

RJ M hm.

MV Who notarized your report?

RJ From what I read McNabb. I don't remember exactly but it said McNabb I read that in the, in the thing.

MV Ok. Did McNabb physically sign the portion on your 707 on the computer, I believe it's digital or did you sign her name for her?

RJ No she would sign that. And yeah, it has to be physical you can't...

MV What I'm saying is did you forge her name?

RJ No.

MV Ok.

RJ Now I will, when, I did read that, our old, our old 707 system you couldn't if you guys remember you could not notarize it until the entire 707 was one hundred percent completed. This new system the second you pull up a 707 and you have filled out no information you can have it notarized before it's even filled out.

MV Right.

RJ So that is a big distinction between ...

BG Yeah.

RJ ...the two systems. I, I still don't know why that's possible.

BG It, it's I don't know why that's possible and I also and I think we, we kind of clarified this when, when we spoke to them but actually the time where it says you signed it is the time and date of when you pull the, the report up.

RJ Right.

BG That's not the actual time and date that the signature's captured which is confusing that we'll look into later for sure.

RJ Right.

MV So then when your report's finished you get it notarized, you submit it, where does it go from there?

RJ From there it goes in a cue to be approved by any person with authority, typically a sergeant. That person whoever that might be reviews it and signs off on that and then it goes to the Branch Jail.

MV Ok. Once you submitted it did any authority that could approve it call you and say this was no good or...

RJ No.

MV ...reach out to you to clarify anything?

RJ No.

MV So then we fast forward, you didn't do the transport right it was somebody else it was the end of, what is your shift?

RJ I don't, my shift now is different from then.

BG Yeah.

RJ I, I think it was 3p or noon to midnight. I'm pretty sure it was noon to midnight that day I don't remember exactly though.

BG Ok.

MV Alright.

RJ Because I've been on swing shift and I was either 3p to 3a or noon to midnight but now it's 6 to 6 so I think it was noon to midnight then.

MV Ok so then you go home and then she's transported. From that point on, did anyone contact you about this case in reference to the involved parties, [REDACTED] or even [REDACTED] or (inaudible)

RJ I, I did run into [REDACTED] just in passing like there, like we were pulling into the district and they're [REDACTED] and she mentioned to me the state prosecutor or attorney reached out to her of course this is a couple days later at this point reached out to her to say we're, we're gonna be dropping this and was explaining to her that process but that's all we talked about.

MV Ok.

BG Do you know of any person either yourself or Sgt. Gonzalez or Dep. McNabb a correlation of a connection to a relative, a family member, anybody that would have influence over this case outside of your independent decision thought making process?

RJ No I did read that and I, I don't even know who they're talking about.

BG Ok. I know there's a there's some person at the jail that I think [REDACTED] dad I think [REDACTED] father at one point was a corrections officer I didn't know if you knew him.

RJ I, I, I've never met [REDACTED] until that day.

BG Ok.

RJ And I don't know anybody of her family.

— BG Ok.

MV And obviously this case involves firefighters from both sides. Do you have any personal vendettas against firefighters or did that, and did that influence and if you did, did that influence your decision making in this case?

BG No we have a great relationship with the firefighters that work [REDACTED]

MV Ok.

BG Couple different things. I know we talked about influences; do you feel that Dep. Berard at the initial onset did that one, does he have any evidence in this case that you think would be pertinent? Like is there a need or do you think there's a need or requirement to contact him to interview him for this case or do you think that his involvement is (unintelligible)

RJ I don't think that would be, I think that would be a waste. He, he barely gave me anything other than...

BG Ok.

RJ ...hey go talk to her and see what she...

BG Ok. Now on that topic did his connection to [REDACTED] influence your decision making process or anything of that...

RJ No, I, I still don't know to this day the depth of their relationship.

BG Ok. In reference to the BWC that there's no BWC for your contact with [REDACTED] do you see how that potentially could be an issue for the agency?

RJ Yes.

BG Ok. Was there any physical evidence or observable evidence through testimony or what not that I know that you said that you believe [REDACTED] rendition of the incident to be not reasonable, but did you have any physical evidence that you believed made her story not believable?

RJ Physical evidence?

BG M hm.

RJ No. I don't I mean other than...

BG So I know there's LPR's I know that she admits to driving but so and I, and I know that your statement is that it's, it's inconceivable or unlikely that she didn't know that these

things were happening. But was there any physical evidence that you have found that prove that she was lying about those aspects?

RJ To prove that she was lying about not knowing?

BG M hm.

RJ I, I don't think that would even ever exist no I, I can't.

BG Ok.

RJ Yeah.

BG We talked about [REDACTED] we never contacted [REDACTED] We didn't get a phone number or reach out or anything?

RJ No after they the victims said what they said I, I stopped all...

BG No that night.

RJ No, no, no.

BG You didn't contact her that night or anything of that nature?

RJ No. Yeah in...

BG So looking back, oh I'm sorry.

RJ In regards to them again it was I'm done since they're out of state out of county...

BG You're not worried about another retaliatory event happening.

RJ No I wasn't, I wasn't...

BG You're more concerned about the DV issue.

RJ Correct there's this isn't DV there's no risk of harm to the victims. They're out of the state out of the county.

BG M hm.

RJ I felt this was something I could just follow up on at a different day.

MV Looking back now on the situation, is there any, anything you would handle differently as it pertains to this case and the information you have now?

RJ Well I would've sent it to district 4. But no I as far as my investigation I, I think I thoroughly looked into it. I, I interpret these, these elements as stalking. It's in my best interest it's not stalking cuz then I don't have to do all this work but I, I don't just half ass things I will really thoroughly go through it and I think that if I would have told these victims there's we're not doing anything I, I feel that's the wrong I think that's the wrong decision and again I can't say this for certain but I'm highly confident if [REDACTED] and her boyfriend went to [REDACTED] house and to reverse the tampons lets just say they bought a hundred condoms and opened them and manipulated the condoms with some substance to think that the condoms were used and threw them in [REDACTED] yard, [REDACTED] calls the Sheriff's Office and we tell her we're not doing anything I guarantee you she would not like that answer.

BG Yeah and my only rebuttal to that and I, I get that. Unfortunately, as a cop we tell people bad news all the time. And I do think that I understand the mindset of not wanting to be the bearer of bad news or not, I understand the over concern with domestic violence I'm not trying to diminish that. But if it's not there it's not there. Is, it's plain, it's as plain as that.

RJ Sure.

BG And I think that being truthful with the victim is sometimes more generous than leading them to a falsehood and saying that there might be something we could do. I think in my contact with people it's best just to be up front with them and say hey listen this sucks but there's nothing legally that I can do to enact an arrest in this situation and it sucks that we have to wait until something else happens but that's the truth of the situation and if you feel differently you have the right to vote you can change things through legislative process.

RJ I will one hundred percent agree with you but in this case I...

BG You felt...

RJ ...still feel...

BG Yeah.

RJ ...I had enough to meet the elements of stalking.

BG And that, would you and I think it's important to note that because of that feeling there was no, you, there was no maliciousness there was no evil intent there was no conspiratorial reason for you arresting [REDACTED]

RJ No.

BG Is that correct?

RJ I, I made the decision I made and the arrest I made because I truly feel I have probable cause to support stalking. Would a reasonable and prudent person believe this crime occurred? I think yes. That's the only reason I made the arrest and if it wasn't DV I would have just filed on her, it's DV. I, I still would have filed even if it wasn't DV.

BG What about BWC? Would you activate your BWC during the initial contact?

RJ If I would have known this was going to evolve into this...

BG Yeah.

RJ ...yes.

BG Yeah.

RJ We, we often have general conversations with somebody and 99.9 percent of them never evolve into nothing. We've literally done that with firefighters. Yes, if I would have known this was going to evolve into that...

BG Took law enforcement action.

RJ ...one hundred percent I should, one hundred percent I should have turned the camera on.

BG Ok.

MV Is there anything else you believe is relevant to this incident that we haven't discussed or questions we haven't asked that you want to put on the record?

RJ No.

MV Ok.

BG Give us one second, we'll be right back.

RJ Ok.

MV Alright thank you. I do have another question reference to the speaking with [REDACTED] over the phone.

RJ Ok.

MV You would consider that a statement or at least something being told to you that's officially being recorded on your body worn camera.

RJ Yes.

MV Any reason why you didn't specifically mention speaking with Dawn in your arrest report that you spoke to her, and she mentioned this or that?

BG In other words, so there were statements by [REDACTED] and their, and part of the complaint is they're wanting to know why that wasn't added to the charging affidavit if you could explain in your own words please.

RJ Because I haven't read it in entirety super detail, but I think I put a blurb in there where [REDACTED] placed blame on [REDACTED]. The reason I didn't put that in there now that you're asking the question is I, I'm doing a charging affidavit on [REDACTED] and I it's a, it's a statement over the phone it's not confirmed it's not legitimized I just, I just thought that it had no bearing on [REDACTED] charging affidavit.

BG M hm, ok.

RJ And that's that's what I'm...

BG Fair enough.

MV Do you believe it would lead someone to believe that things were omitted if, if that was said on scene?

RJ You could interpret it that way sure.

MV You have any other questions? Ok, in conclusion I'm going to read you the general orders you have been alleged to have violated and I want you to answer yes or no as to whether or not you violated these general orders.

BG You believe you violated.

MV Use of BWC equipment?

RJ Yes.

MV Disciplinary rules?

RJ No.

MV Negligence not endangering?

RJ No.

MV General proficiency?

RJ No.

MV Ok I don't have any further questions. Lt. Gordon, do you?

BG That concludes the end of the interview. It is 1247 hours.

I, Sgt. Michael Vanzo swear that the forgoing is an accurate transcription of the sworn recorded statement of Dep. Royce James taken by me on February 6, 2026.

(Signed)

M. Vanzo 8469
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 14th Day of April, 2026.

[Signature]
Signature of Notary Public-State of Florida



(Print, type or Stamp Commissioned Name of Notary Public)

My Commission Expires:

My Commission Number is:

Personally Known ✓

Produced identification

Type of Identification Produced